



NEWS RELEASE

PRESS OFFICE

Release Date: February 8, 2000

Release Number: 00-08

Contact: D.J. Caulfield (202) 205-6740

Internet Address: www.sba.gov/news/

SBA ADMINISTRATOR ALVAREZ STRESSES NEED FOR SMALL FIRMS TO BE E-COMMERCE SAVVY

WASHINGTON – The head of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Aida Alvarez, told participants at a procurement gathering here today that a primary goal for small business owners interested in doing business with the federal government should be to master electronic commerce.

Administrator Alvarez served as the opening day keynote speaker for the two-day **White House Community Empowerment Board Procurement Opportunity Fair** being held in Washington, DC. A conference highlight occurred when the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) awarded a multi-year HUBZone contract valued at up to \$4 million to a locally-owned transportation company. HUBZone is a program run by the SBA.

“The introduction of electronic commerce in federal contracting is moving full speed ahead. The day of eCommerce has arrived,” said Administrator Alvarez. **“Small business owners must remain fully competitive by adopting this new business strategy. The SBA can help with the transition to eCommerce, and also offers programs so small firms can tap the \$200 billion-per-year federal procurement marketplace.”**

The conference, which concludes tomorrow, is providing small business owners a chance to secure on-the-spot contracts, one-to-one counseling and specialized procurement training. Several Washington metropolitan business organizations helped sponsor the event, which attracted many small, small disadvantaged and women-owned business participants.

As part of the conference, the SBA is conducting educational seminars, one dedicated to eCommerce. The panel is looking at the new digital economy, exploring how small businesses might be affected and suggesting what SBA can do to help.

“President Clinton understands the value of eCommerce,” said Administrator Alvarez, **“which is why his budget contains a request that SBA be given \$5 million to educate and train small businesses on electronic commerce and use of the Internet.”**

In addition to the eCommerce seminar, the SBA is offering updates on a variety of contracting programs such as:

- **The HUBZone Empowerment Contracting Program**, which gives small businesses located in 8,000 distressed communities nationwide access to set-asides and price adjustments on federal contracts.

-more-

- **The 8(a) Business Development Program**, which helps small businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals compete in the economic mainstream, partially through access to federal contracts. Many of the current 5,300 8(a) participants are minority-owned businesses.
- **The Small Disadvantaged Business Certification Program**, which ensures that firms are fully qualified to receive price evaluation adjustment credits and other considerations on certain federal contracts.

The conference is structured to give attendees details on tools, programs and strategies offered through the Administration's Community Empowerment Agenda. This initiative is designed to help distressed communities open doors that will let them benefit from the growing national economy.

The VA's HUBZone contract was awarded to Mr. McKinley Battle, a veteran and president of Battle's Transportation of Washington, DC. The minority-owned company will provide wheelchair van service to eligible veterans who need to visit the local VA Medical Center. The initial contract is for one year, with the potential for four one-year options.

This procurement event was organized by the President's Community Empowerment Board, chaired by Vice President Al Gore, in partnership with the Washington, DC Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Washington Board of Trade, the Greater Washington Ibero American Chamber of Commerce and a variety of federal, state and local government agencies.

#